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ABSTRACT

The role of school counselors has expanded in the 1980s in response to societal changes. The traditional services of individual appraisal, career information, counseling, placement, follow-up, and research are now accompanied by the need for counselors to work with problems such as dropouts and potential dropouts; substance abusers; suicide; physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; pregnancy; and married students. Counselors also must keep abreast of complex and changing curriculum. In addition, middle and elementary school counselors are expected to consult with parents and provide parent education. School counselor educators are faced with the dilemma of preparng counselors to be both generalists who know the total school program and who are available to the entire school population and preparing them also to be specialists who know the student in both individual and group settings. Current programs vary widely in their requirements for degrees in counseling. A more consistent standard using the Council for Accreditation of Counselor Education and Related Education Programs standards is needed if school counselor preparation programs are to insure a comprehensive curricula which addresses the delineation between generalist and specialist. (ABB)

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"SCHOOL COUNSELOR PREPARATION CURRICULUM: HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?"

by
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A paper presented at the fall conference of the North Central Association of Counselor Education and Supervision
November 14, 1985, Chicago

The purpose of this paper is to generate discussion regarding the preparation curricula for school counselors. A brief review of the history of school counseling, as well as preparation standards for the past and present are discussed.

While the preparation of school counselors has been a reality for many years, the passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) Title V in 1958, gave the real impetus for this important task.

Since 1958, hundreds, if not thousands, of articles have been written pertaining to the role of the school counselor at all levels. Professional associations such as the American School Counselors Association (ASCA), and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), have collaborated to define role and to devise standards for school counselor preparation. More recently the Council for Accreditation of Counselor Education and Related Education Programs (CACREP), has produced standards for school counselor preparation.

Wrenn (1962), in his now famous book, The Counselor in a Changing World, stated in regard to school counselors:

> The counselor must respond to individual need and societal need, not either one to the exclusion of the other. Societal needs will vary from period to period, with differing emphases on scientific discovery, technological execution, internal social advancement, international statesmanship, the world of beauty in art, literature, theatre, etc. All must be served to be sure, but the counselor must have some sense of the greatest potential need in the period that is ahead for the student. (p. 74)

While it is apparent, from the above statement, that Wrenn had far greater insight into the future than could reasonably be expected of any human being, it is probable that not even he, could anticipate the tremendous societal changes that have taken place since this statement was written. To be sure, these have had an impact on school counseling.

In the 80's it has become apparent that counselors at the secondary level can no longer be content to offer the traditional services of individual appraisal, career information, counseling, placement, follow-up, research, etc. The aftermath of the complex and ever changing society in which we live has presented school counselors with the need to counsel and work with problems such as dropouts and potential dropouts, substance abusers, suicide, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, pregnancy, married students, etc. In addition, the counselor is expected to stay abreast of an ever increasing complex and expanding curriculum along with the changing world of work brought about by advanced technology.

Many of the problems in the preceding paragraph have also reached the elementary and middle school. In addition, these counselors are expected to consult with parents more than ever before, and in many cases to provide parent education. Mainstreaming and the needs of the "special" student have become a responsibility of the school counselor in many instances. Counseling with these students, while important and necessary, utilizes untold hours of the counselors time, sometimes at the

expense of dealing with prevention and growth engendering activities at the elementary/middle school level, and other activities at the high school level.

While federal and state legislation continues to place more and more responsibility upon the schools, usually with some supplementary financial reward, little is proposed or set aside for the counselor. As Aubrey (1985) stated:

> Those in the counseling profession who have spent time reviewing the rash of educational reform proposals for the 1980's might rightly wonder what became of guidance and counseling. Few proposals even mention guidance and counseling. (p. 91)

As one ponders the make-up of school counselor preparation curriculum, the question arises, how much is enough? The answer to that question is obviously a tough one! Perhaps for at least a partial answer one could again return to Wrenn (1962), in which he writes about the school counselor as a "generalist" and as a "specialist":

> (a) The counselor is a generalist in the sense of his being widely available to the total school population and attempting to possess some knowledge of the total school program. He is a generalist also in the sense that he should be acquainted with the complete scope of school referral resources and know how these may be utilized by himself or by other members of the staff.
> (b) The counselor is a specialist in his specific knowledge of the student and in his ability to relate himself effectively to the student in both individual and group situations. He is a specialist in the total scope of student learnings in and out of the classroom. He is a specialist in the collation and interpretation of information about individual student populations - to the student himself, to staff, to administrators, and to parents. (p. 143)

It would appear that school counselor educators are faced with a dilemma. Should counselor educators prepare school counselors to provide a broad base of counseling and guidance ser-

vices and assume that this preparation will suffice to prepare counselors to deal with the present and future societal problems? Is it the task of counselor education to prepare counselors to deal with the current problems being faced in today's schools to the extent that specialized training would be forthcoming in many different areas? Should school counselor preparation currricula be devised in such a way so as to prepare the counselor to perform the traditional role while at the same time preparing the counselor for the specific problems currently in the schools? Obviously, one could debate for and against either of the three possibilities.

Regardless of the direction counselor education might decide to go, it is apparent that a consistent standard to school counselor preparation must be applied. An analysis of Hollis and Wantz (1983-85) Counselor Preparation Programs, Personnel, Trends, revealed the following in terms of school counselor preparation.

Of the 169 institutions reporting that they had school counselor preparation programs, the following was discovered. Semester credit hour requirements for a master's degree in school counseling varied from a low of 30 semester hours to a high of 60. The mean number of semester credit hours was found to be 38.18, while the median and mode was 36. Fifty-three institutions of the 169 reported a requirement of 36 semester hours. A further analysis with regard to the North Central Region of the American Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) indicated that 65 institutions reported within that region. In this region the low requirement for a master's degree

was again 30 semester hours and the high 60. The mean was 37.41 while the median and mode remained at 36. Twenty-six of the 65 institutions reported a requirement of 36 semester hours.

From the above data, one could conclude that the vast majority of school counselor requirements for a master's degree are well below that recommended by CACREP.

CACREP standards (1983) as they relate to a program of studies, recommends preparation in a common core comprised of: human growth and development, social and cultural foundations, the helping relationship, groups, life style and career development, appraisal of the individual, research/evaluation, and professional orientation. Secondly, it recommends environmental and specialized studies. Included in this area are supervised experiences including laboratory, practicum, and internships, all related to the work setting. Of course there are other standards as well.

It would appear to this investigator that the CACREP standards address school counselor preparation in such a way as to delineate between the generalist-specialist. Perhaps the answer to the question, "how much is enough?" can be found in the CACREP standards.

In conclusion, no longer does it seem feasible that school counselor preparation can be accomplished in 30 semester hours, or even substantially more. If school counselors are to successfully satisfy the needs of those they serve, then it would appear the time has come to encourage a more demanding and comprehensive curricula for their preparation. It is not enough, in this

writer's opinion, for some institutions to maintain "high" standards while others would appear to be "marginal." It is not enough for some institutions to accept five students into a school counselor practicum while others accept as many as 20 or 30 with one supervisor! If the profession is to survive, in our ever changing, complex society, a concerted effort must be forthcoming to apply consistent, demanding standards in all school counselor preparation programs.

Perhaps the time has come for more, and preferably all, institutions to move in the direction of devising school counselor preparation curricula based upon CACREP standards, and to pursue this accreditation. The challenge is before us, we must respond!

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